

# JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

Chairman

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## CHURCH WORLD SERVICE REPORT ON TIDAL WAVE

In the early hours of Tuesday, May 24th, the entire Pacific Coast of Japan was struck suddenly and without warning by huge tidal waves. The waves were 18 feet high in some areas and swept inland as far as five miles. Within a few hours the waters had receded, but in the midst of the debris lay 114 dead and 872 injured. 2,600 families lost their homes. Altogether 160,000 persons were affected, and property damage is estimated at nearly 60 million dollars.

When news of the disaster reached Japan Church World Service, preparations were made immediately to send relief goods to the stricken areas. The following morning 12,000 pounds of clothing, 11,000 pounds of wheat flour, and 1,200 pounds of emergency rations were sent to Tokyo International Airport where four planes of the Air Self-Defense Force stood ready for flight. Their destination was Matsushima Airfield in Miyagi Prefecture, one of four prefectures in northern Japan hit hardest by the waves. The governor of Miyagi had requested immediate assistance, and the JCWS commodities were the first to be sent.

The Rev. Donald E. Bitsberger, Associate Director of JCWS, accompanied the relief commodities in order to make an on-the-spot inspection of the area. Upon arrival, Mr. Bitsberger went directly to the prefectural offices in Sendai, where he was joined by the Reverend Shigeru Iwata, Chairman of the JCWS Committee in Miyagi. Together with prefect-







ural officials, they discussed the needs of the victims and the ways in which JCWS could be of assistance.

The following day Mr. Bitsberger and Mr. Morita joined the Assistant Governor at an airfield near Sendai for a flight by helicopter along the coastline to the north. The harbors are home to many of the fishing fleets of Japan. Their narrow channels surrounded by hills provide protection from storms. But there is no protection from tidal waves. In fact, the qualities of these harbors became liabilities. The waters gained new force as they crowded into the narrow channels. They pushed far inland, submerging the cities which had grown up around such excellent harbors.

As the plane worked its way north, we looked down upon port cities and villages which had been shattered by the waves. Buildings near the water had been swept away. Boats and ships - some of them large - lay scattered through the cities. A few were wedged into tiny streets; others sat helplessly in rice fields hundreds of yards from the shore.

The worst-hit cities were Shizugawa and Ofunatoo. They claimed over half of the total casualties. Block after block had been razed. In Shizugawa a near 1,000 houses had been destroyed. When the plane landed in a nearby schoolyard, we could see more clearly the extent of the damage - and also the heroic efforts of the citizens to clear away the mountains of debris and rubble. Already - two days after the floods - new houses were being built.

But it was obvious that the needs of the victims were great. Thousands had lost everything. They needed clothing, bedding, and the simplest of utensils and tools. For months to come they would depend upon the assistance of others; their own inadequate resources would be spent to re-build their shattered homes. In such circumstances gifts of clothing and bedding were especially precious. Likewise the assurance of contributions of food allowed the victims to proceed with the work of re-construction without concern for daily bread. Japan Church World Service was grateful that the generosity of Christians abroad allowed it to make substantial contributions of food, clothing, and bedding to the victims. Within a week after the disaster, JCWS had shipped 71,000 pounds of food and clothing, valued at more than 40,000 dollars.

Although the disaster was modest in scale compared with the Nagoya typhoon, it contained a lesson which will not be soon forgotten.  
( from CWS report of Rev. Mr. Donald Bitsberger )

#### CLARIFICATION OF NCC STAND ON EISENHOWER VISIT TO MEIJI SHRINE

In the May 15th issue under 'Oppose visit of Eisenhower to Meiji Shrine,' it is written that "the NCC Executive Committee on May 18 decided to approve the visit since a religious ceremony will not be held. ...." This is misleading and in order to correctly set forth the NCC position, we quote the May 18 cable to President Eisenhower. "SPECIAL MEETING NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL EXECUTIVE HEARD REPORT OF REPRESENTATIVES PROTESTING MEIJI SHRINE VISIT WHILE REGRETTING INABILITY TO CANCEL VISIT WELCOMES ASSURANCE OF ABSOLUTELY NO RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES" signed T. Muto, K. Hirai and M. Kozaki.

#### CONSULTATION ON THE CHURCH IN MODERN SOCIETY TO BE HELD







Proceeding further with the emphasis started by the EACC with the establishment of the Committee on the Witness of Laity and the Hong Kong course on the "Laity and Youth," the NCC is planning the consultation on 'The Church in Modern Society' or more specifically the 'Laity in The Church in Modern Society' for this fall in Osaka-Tokyo area. The purpose is to study how the churches in Asia can involve actual conversation with living issues in respect to society and further how to train the laity for the task of witness in daily life. It is hoped to have two delegates each from Korea, Hong Kong, Okinawa, Taiwan and the Philippines. Invitations have also been extended to New Zealand and Australia.

It is hoped that Dr. Hendrik Kraemer who is arriving here in September for two months of conferences and lectures can participate as a resource person. (When Dr. Kraemer's schedule is finalized we will publish it).

#### AVACO FILM UNIT PRODUCING 'THE OTHER WISEMAN' THRU PUPPET MEDIUM

Mr. Shunjiro Yamamoto, a puppet expert, was called in by AVACO to make puppets for filming the story "The Other Wise Man". A short training film was made showing the step by step production of the puppets. Then the story itself was first made in black and white and a final version was produced in Kodachrome. Sound in English and Japanese will be provided so it can be used on TV and in film evangelism abroad as well as here in Japan.

In the production of the film the staff members were also trained in techniques and on the basis of the experience gained in the project are ready to undertake more ambitious film projects.



